

Appl. No. : 09/658,784  
Filed : September 11, 2000

### REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the final rejections in the Final Office Action mailed August 13, 2003.

#### Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner has rejected Claims 61, 67, 103, and 110 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Tanaka et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,234,107).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections and submit that the Examiner has misunderstood the distinctions noted by Applicants.

The Examiner states that "Applicant's argument that Tanaka does not teach 'an upper portion' as amended is not convincing. Tanaka teaches both an upper chamber that is a 'portion' of the overall structure."

Applicants did not and do not assert that Tanaka lacks an upper portion of the overall structure. Rather, Applicants submit that Tanaka does not include the "first port" in the upper portion, contrary to independent Claims 61 and 67. Each of those claims makes clear that the first port is the port that communicates between a load lock and the substrate handling chamber, which in turn communicates with at least one process chamber. The Examiner accordingly incorrectly identifies the first port in Tanaka as 14'. In reality, Figure 1 of Tanaka plainly shows that the first port is indicated by reference number 10 — that is the port that communicates with substrate handling chamber 4, which is in turn in communication with the process chambers 1, 2, 3. Thus, the Examiner has incorrectly identified 14' as the first port, whereas the first port of Tanaka is port 10.

Put another way, the Examiner has identified the wrong substrate handling chamber 16. While transfer chamber 16 is in communication with the port 14, and the port 14' of Figure 6 is in communication with the upper chamber, this transfer chamber 16 of Tanaka fails to meet the claims. That is because the transfer chamber 16 does not selectively communicate with at least one process chamber.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that Tanaka teaches the opposite configuration to that taught by the present application and recited in independent Claims 61 and 67. The port 14' in Figure 6 does not communicate with a substrate handling chamber that communicates with the process chambers. Rather, port 14 communicates with a substrate handling chamber 16 that communicates with cassettes 17 for storing wafers.

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Moreover, Applicants submit that the claimed arrangement represents a significant distinction over Tanaka. Tanaka provides wafers through the port 14' to load the wafer in the upper position. Then, before transferring the wafer into the process chamber, the elevator plate 55 is lowered so that the load lock chamber becomes a bigger chamber and more subject to impurities before it is transferred into the processing environment. See Tanaka at Col. 7, lines 19-32.

In contrast, the recited arrangement of Claims 61 and 67 is capable of loading the wafer at a lower level, raising the wafer into the upper portion and thereby sealing the wafer in a smaller, more controllable environment before transferring the wafer into the processing environment from the upper portion. This sequence is not possible with the structure taught by Tanaka. Moreover, neither Tanaka nor any other reference of record teaches or suggests modifying the structure of Tanaka to meet the limitations of independent Claims 61 and 67.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are patentably distinct over the teachings of Tanaka et al. and the prior art of record. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the claims.

#### **Claims Rejections — 35 U.S.C. § 103**

The Examiner has rejected the remaining claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanaka et al. or Saeki (U.S. Patent No. 5,223,001) in view of secondary references.

Applicants have cancelled all claims that do not depend from independent Claims 61 and 67, the patentability of which is discussed above. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections for obviousness are moot.

Dependent Claims 103-116 depend from one of independent Claims 61 or 67, and therefore include all the features and limitations thereof. Furthermore, these dependent claims recite further distinguishing features of particular utility. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that each of the pending claims is allowable over the art of record and respectfully request the same.

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### CONCLUSIONS

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that the remaining claims are patentable over the art of record and respectfully request allowance. If, however, some issue remains that the Examiner feels can be addressed by Examiner amendment, the Examiner is cordially invited to call the undersigned for authorization.

Respectfully submitted,

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